

VZCZCXRO7096
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1601/01 1361349
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161349Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1183
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001601

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BAGHDAD RESIDENTS DISAPPOINTED IN SECURITY PLAN

REF: A. BAGHDAD 546

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 781

[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 1178

Classified by Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons
1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Over the past week, both Shia and Sunni Baghdad residents from all parts of the city have expressed to PRT Baghdad frustration with what they called the disappointing progress of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP). On the security front, most said dire security conditions still preclude normal life in most parts of the city, although a few said marginal improvements have decreased militia and insurgent activity in their areas. Residents continue to express distrust and fear of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), especially the police. All of those interviewed said there has been no improvement in the provision of electricity and little improvement in other services such as trash collection. These perceptions do not match recent polling data and may reflect overly optimistic expectations that the early gains of the BSP would continue at a steady pace of improving conditions. End summary.

Baghdad Residents Complain of Slow Progress on Security

[1](#)2. (C) One Shia contact whose brother and uncle were tortured and executed under the former regime said security conditions in Baghdad have become so intolerable that she longs for the days of Saddam Hussein, because at least his regime provided security. The woman, a resident of Kadhamiya (in north Baghdad), said that militia activity has picked up in her area in the past two weeks and is spilling over into neighboring Adhamiya. She said that she has heard increasing reports of intra-Shia violence, particularly between Jaysh Al-Mehdi (JAM) and the Badr Brigade. She said that she would never call the police to report a crime because they are often tied to militias and criminal gangs. She added that several of her friends and relatives have reported kidnappings to the police, only to have the police inform the kidnappers that her friends had filed complaints against them.

[1](#)3. (C) A Sunni resident of Yarmouk (west Baghdad) said sectarian cleansing has driven nearly all Shia families out of his neighborhood. He said that shootings and clashes occur so frequently in his area that he often sleeps in his office in a neighboring district because he is afraid to drive home. He said Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) have a limited presence in the area and that he never sees U.S. troops.

[1](#)4. (C) A Shia resident of Al-Qahira (northeast Baghdad, near Sadr City) said security conditions have deteriorated slightly in her neighborhood in recent weeks, mostly due to a spike in mortar attacks and shootings. She said that she routinely sees dead bodies in the street on her way to work in spite of increased ISF presence in the area. She said

that she does not feel safe walking alone in the street at any hour, and that even men will not walk in the street in groups after dark. When asked if she has confidence in ISF, she said police &don,t do anything or are criminals.⁸ She said the army is more trustworthy but that she would still rather report problems to U.S. forces.

¶15. (C) A Shia resident of Al-Salhiya (central Baghdad) said security conditions have improved slightly in his area since the start of BSP. He said the increased presence of ISF in the neighborhood appears to have scared away JAM and Sunni extremist elements and that he feels fairly safe until he leaves his neighborhood. He said he would feel safer if there were more U.S. troops in the area. When asked if he has confidence in ISF, he said police are often linked to militias and that he might consider reporting problems to the Iraqi Army, but only by phone because &terrorists monitor who visits army installations.⁸

¶16. (C) A Shia resident of the predominantly Sunni Ghazalia neighborhood (west Baghdad) said she fled her house about three weeks ago after Sunni extremists murdered her husband and son. She said the family had been thinking of leaving the area even before the attack due to dire security conditions.

¶17. (C) A Shia resident of Jamila (northeast Baghdad) said security conditions are fairly stable in her area, and that there has been little sectarian tension in spite of the presence of Sunni and Shia families. She said she feels somewhat safer due to increased ISF presence in the area, but added security conditions in the nearby areas of Sadr City, Baladiyat, Shaab and New Baghdad are deteriorating due to increasing tension between JAM and other Shia elements such as the Badr Brigades. She said that JAM lost some influence

BAGHDAD 00001601 002 OF 003

when many of its leaders left Baghdad ahead of the security plan, and that the ensuing power struggles for areas JAM once controlled are causing instability. When asked if she has confidence in ISF, she said she would feel comfortable reporting crimes to the police but wouldn,t expect them to do anything because they are &poorly trained and equipped.⁸

¶18. (C) A Sunni resident of Bayaa (in the Rashid district, southeast Baghdad) said the area has experienced violent clashes between Sunni extremists, JAM and Kurdish Peshmerga Army units over the past two weeks. He said JAM is driving Sunnis out of predominantly Shia areas and that the Peshmerga have sided with the Sunnis in clashes with JAM. He added that he has never seen American troops in his neighborhood. He also said that Iraqi police are complicit in JAM activities and that ISF have repeatedly failed to act on tips that JAM uses the Zahra Husseinia (Shia mosque) as a weapons depot and operations center.

¶19. (C) A Shia resident of Bayaa said JAM has destroyed at least three Sunni mosques in the area in the past two weeks (the Fatah Bash, Kautha and Rahman mosques). He said that security conditions are so terrible in the area that he stays home as much as possible. (MNC-I comment: Neither Corps nor MND-Baghdad can confirm that JAM has destroyed the Fatah Bash, Kautha and Rahman mosques End comment.)

¶110. (C) A Shia resident of New Baghdad (east Baghdad) said security conditions in her area are even worse than they were before BSP and that she lives in constant fear. She said JAM is active in the area and has been killing and expelling Sunnis. She said JAM also targets Shia thought to be working with the U.S. When asked if she has confidence in ISF, she said she would never call the police due to the presence of militia supporters and criminals within police ranks.

¶111. (C) Two Shia residents of Karrada (east Baghdad) said security conditions are fairly good in their area and that their only pressing security concern is car bombs. They said

the presence of ISF and the security teams of the many Iraqi officials who live in the area contribute to stability.

Residents Complain about Electricity, Trash Collection

¶12. (C) All of the above contacts said they have either the same amount of electricity as before the beginning of BSP or less. An Al-Salhiya resident said he has an hour or less of electricity daily and that he is forced to buy fuel for his generator on the black market due to chronic state shortages and his fear of being targeted for a car bombing while standing in line at a state-supplied fuel station. He said that trash collectors remove garbage about once every three days, forcing residents to resort to burning trash rather than inviting insects and rats.

¶13. (C) Two Karrada residents said they have two hours of electricity per day or less and that they often cannot supply their generators with fuel because lines are too long in the morning and most fuel stations run out of supplies before they finish work. They said trash collectors come about every other day.

¶14. (C) Residents of New Baghdad and Kadhimiya said they have about two hours of electricity per day, which they said is less than before the beginning of BSP.

¶15. (C) Residents of Yarmouk and Ghazaliya said they have less than two hours of electricity per day and that trash collection is erratic.

MNF-I Polling Data

¶16. (C) Opinion polling concerning the Baghdad Security Plan indicates progress regarding security and services since January. For example, 50.3 % of Baghdad residents feel the Iraqi police enforce the law in an equitable manner (this is 5.1% better than January 07). Regarding security in April, 35% of Baghdad residents rated their neighborhoods as secure (2.3% better than January 07). Although most Baghdad residents are frustrated with basic services, improvement is occurring in satisfaction rates. For example, although only 26% of residents are satisfied with trash, this is a 4.6% improvement over January. Against this backdrop of gradual improvement since January, we clearly have more ground to cover before most Baghdad residents are truly happy with conditions. Baghdad residents continue to express their concerns, as outlined by the individual interview comments above.

Comment

BAGHDAD 00001601 003 OF 003

¶17. (C) Neither comments from Baghdad residents nor polling data are meant to be a definitive judgment on the Baghdad Security Plan; both reflect perceptions that are difficult to measure and constantly changing. These particular comments are typical of what Baghdad residents have expressed to PRToffs recently: disappointment with slow improvements in security conditions and frustration with failed efforts to improve services. This also tracks with local press treatment of the BSP. Pessimistic views may result from having had unrealistic expectations that early gains in the Baghdad Security Plan would continue on a steady trajectory. Some residents have mentioned marginal security improvements in their areas but say they expected more progress nearly three months into the plan. Baghdad residents, lack of confidence in ISF, particularly the police, is unmistakable and underscores at least the perception (if not the reality) that police are heavily penetrated by militia and criminal elements.

CROCKER